


CHALCEDON

No. 404, March 1999

Report



CHRIST'S ATONEMENT & CHRISTIAN CULTURE

R. J. Rushdoony on
Guilt, Atonement and Freedom

Andrew Sandlin on
Atonement and Culture

Brian Abshire on
The Basics of the Atonement

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Chalcedon Vision Statement

Chalcedon labors to articulate in the clearest possible terms a distinctly Christian and explicitly Biblical solution to the prevalent evils of the modern world. Our objective is nothing short of setting forth the vision and program for rebuilding the theological fortifications of Christian civilization. These fortifications have been eroded by the forces of humanism and secularism over the past three centuries. We are not committed, though, merely to reproducing a glorious Christian past. We work to press the claims of historic Christianity as the Biblical pattern of life everywhere. We work for godly cultural change across the entire spectrum of life. We strive to accomplish this objective by two principal methods.

First, Chalcedon is committed to recovering the intellectual foundations of Christian civilization. We do this in two main ways. Negatively, we expose the bankruptcy of all non-Christian (and alleged but compromising Christian) systems of thought and practice. Positively, we propose an explicitly Biblical system of thought and action as the exclusive basis for civilization. Only by restoring the Christian Faith and Biblical law as the standard of all of life can Christians hope to re-establish Christian civilization.

Second, Chalcedon is dedicated to providing the tools for rebuilding this Christian civilization. We work to assist individuals, families, and institutions by offering explicitly Biblical alternatives to anti-Christian ideas and practices. In this way we guide Christians in the task of governing their own spheres of life in terms of the entire Bible: in family, church, school, vocation, arts, economics, business, media, the state, and all other areas of modern life.

We believe that the source of godly change is regeneration by the Holy Spirit, not revolution by the violence of man. As God regenerates more and more individuals, and as they reorient their lives and areas of personal influence to the teachings of the Bible, He employs them to advance His kingdom and establish Christian civilization. We believe that God's law is the divine pattern of sanctification in every area of life, but it is not the means of justification; man is saved by grace, not by law. The role of every earthly government—including family government, church government, school government, vocational government, and civil government—is to submit to Biblical law. No government in any form can make men Christians or truly obedient; this is the work of God's sovereign grace. Much less should civil government try to impose Biblical law on an unbelieving society. Biblical law cannot be imposed; it must be embraced.

A guiding principle of Chalcedon, in fact, is its devotion to maximum individual freedom under God's law. Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition of Jesus Christ as God of very God and Man of very man, a formula directly challenging every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative; only Christ may announce that "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Historically, therefore, the Chalcedonian creed is the foundation of Western liberty, setting limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of all human freedom (Galatians 5:1). Consequently, we oppose top-heavy, authoritarian systems of government which are, by definition, non-Christian. We advocate instead a series of independent but cooperative institutions and a highly decentralized social order.

Chalcedon is an educational institution. It supports the efforts of Christians and Christian organizations to implement the vision of Christian civilization. Though unapologetically Reformed, Chalcedon supports the kingdom work of all orthodox denominations and churches. Chalcedon is an independent Christian foundation governed by a board of trustees, Christian men in accord with Chalcedon's vision statement. The foundation is not subordinate to the authority of any particular denomination or ecclesiastical body.

CHALCEDON Report

A Monthly Report Dealing With the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World

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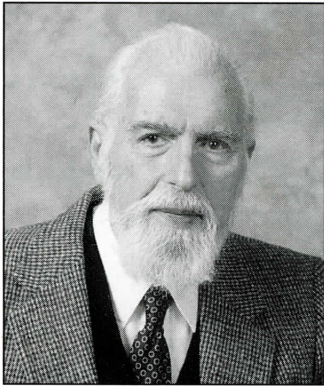
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The Cultural War

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony



Years ago, I read the study by a medieval scholar of the great religious war of the ages, between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. The writer scornfully concluded that the two alien realms were merging instead of warring. The church was becoming more like the world than vice versa.

In our time, the problem is more serious. Unbelief is robbing the churches of their status as part of the kingdom of God. Too often the seemingly orthodox take a loose view of infallibility, six-day creation, the atonement, and more. They are often more hostile to the truths of orthodoxy than to the modernists.

The attempt to merge the two cultures is a futile one, however, because good and evil cannot be reconciled. Men may dream of merging good and evil, but they create by their efforts only a more radical and explosive division.

God is eternally God: he does not change. Moreover,

God is not man's creature. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We cannot lessen nor alter the truth of God. Thus, we have more than a few men who may agree with God's law "up to a point" but want to make it useful by adapting it to our times. But God's word is not ours to amend with our "superior" wisdom.

We commonly hear ourselves better than we hear God, and we are much more in love with what we have to say than what God has said. After all, the essence of modernism is the belief that our experiences and our thinking far excel God's and, therefore, we must correct him and his word. Men make themselves God's editor in their arrogance! But ordination does not give man editorial supervision over God!

Years ago, as a student, I recall hearing a young ministerial student discuss his version of the future of the church. As he saw it, as the church better expressed the noblest of human thought, it would in time become the world's church. It would purify and best express man's best side and create a true heaven on earth.

Of course, he did not believe in original sin, but rather in natural goodness. This is the dividing line. The culture of fallen humanity affirms man's goodness, whereas the Bible tells us of man's depravity. The cultural war between the two permits no reconciliation of their premises.

ATTENTION COVENANT YOUTH!

We have begun a new feature in the *Chalcedon Report*. Every month we would like to publish a brief article by a young Christian (no older than 20) either home schooled or in a Christian day school. The article should be 500-1500 words and be on a topic in line with Chalcedon's Vision Statement.

Chalcedon will pay \$50.00 for any article published.

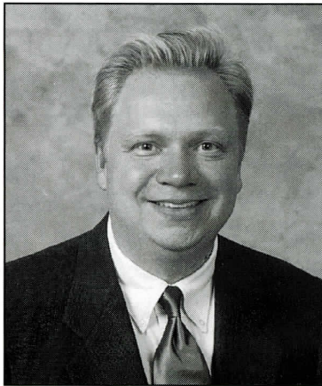
Please send submissions to Susan Burns c/o Chalcedon,
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Atonement and Culture

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin



When we say that a point is the *crux* of the matter, what we are really saying is that just as the cross is central to Christianity, so a particular point is central to the issue under discussion.¹ In the Bible, the term *crux* is a metonym for Christ's atoning death. When we say that the cross is the

central feature of Christianity, what we are really saying is that the *atonement* is the central feature of Christianity.

The Bible presents the atonement from several different perspectives. At particular times in the history of the church, one or more of those perspectives has gained the ascendancy in the understanding of Christians. Aspects of the atonement include victory over Satan, ransom, satisfaction of justice, substitution, reconciliation between God and man, and much more.² Two definitions are central to the Biblical meaning of atonement. First, Christ's death deals decisively with the dilemma of man's sin in such a way as to do away with the barrier which that sin erects between God and man. Second, Christ's death satisfies the terms of God's justice. In other words, Christ's death is a *restitution*. The Old Testament sacrificial system is meaningless apart from an understanding of atonement. For, "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (*Lev. 17:11*). God is a just God, and man is a sinful man. God's justice requires restitution—death (*Gen. 2:16-17*). In the Old Testament, the animals sacrificed were a temporary means of restitution, an atonement that God accepted for man's sin until his Son, Jesus Christ, died on the cross as the final, enduring, definitive atonement for man's sins. On the cross, in other words, sinful man made restitution to God in the Person of Jesus Christ. This is to say that Christ's death was a vicarious, or *substitutionary*, atonement. In the Biblical scheme of salvation, to separate substitution from atonement is to destroy the meaning of atonement; and, in a more fundamental sense, to do away with the atonement is to do away with Christianity. No atonement, no Christianity: the cross is truly the "crux."

But the Christian Faith is by no means individualistic. It addresses the individual as an individual made in the image of God though a sinner against God, but it also and equally addresses the individual in the corporate or *covenantal* scheme of God's dealings. In God's plan, the one

and the many are equally ultimate. An aspect of this corporate or covenantal character of Christianity is *culture*. Culture is the externalization of a society's religion. It is the decisively religious element of society as it expresses itself in that society's life. This means, among other things, that a Christian society will look different from, say, a secular, Islamic, Satanist, or Buddhist society, and these will produce different cultures. The society anchored in orthodox Christianity will manifest the implications of the doctrine of the atonement, since the atonement is the *crux* of Christianity. The understanding of the atonement, in other words, weaves itself into the very fabric of the Christian society and its culture; its implications are not limited to the family and the church.

Justice

First, a Christian culture, because of its understanding of the atonement, is rooted in Biblical *justice*. This is simply another way of saying that it is anchored in *Biblical law*. A prime example is the *lex talionis*: An eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, stripe for stripe, wound for wound, etc. (*Ex. 21:23-25*). When man sins against God, he breaks God's law; he must suffer the penalty of breaking God's law. If this law also happens to be a crime in Biblical terms (most sins are not crimes), he also suffers a penalty at the hands of the state. This notion is considered barbaric by moderns, for whom culture is essentially sociological and psychological rather than judicial. This is seen in the modern criminal "justice" system, clearly a contradiction of terms. The issue today is not justice, but psychology and rehabilitation. For modern jurisprudence, two- to five-fold restitution for theft (and penal servitude for those who cannot pay [*Ex. 22:1-4*]) is barbaric, while throwing convicted thieves into prison where they are routinely raped, sodomized, and dehumanized is "rehabilitative." This is an example of the juridical perversion that arises when men abandon the Christian Faith and its implications for society and culture. The modern notion that penology is essentially rehabilitative strikes out at the Biblical notion of justice. In the Biblical perspective, penology is objectively retributive, not subjectively restorative. Of course, in being retributive it is *also* often subjectively restorative. The man who pays the Biblical penalty for his sin or crime usually experiences the psychological relief of knowing that he has satisfied the terms of God's justice. This fact, however, is incidental to the terms of justice themselves.

Freedom

Second, a Christian culture grounded in a Biblical grasp

of atonement is an *anti-totalitarian* culture,³ because it is aware that, fundamentally, sin cannot be eliminated on human terms and by human means. For example, in the Bible there are no “crimes against the state,” only crimes against, first, God, and, second, other individuals. Sin can be dealt with decisively only by the atoning death of Jesus Christ; crime can be dealt with decisively only in terms of Biblical law. When a society abandons Christianity, it does not thereby abandon the need for atonement; it simply transfers the object of atonement from God to man—and usually to a tyrannical state. In China, Cuba, North Korea—and the United States—“crimes against the state” are atoned for in hellish gulags. The state recreates its own justice and depicts itself as the deity to whom those sinning against it must make atonement. Marx believed that justice was simply a human convention erected by society’s leaders to capture and maintain power, and that there are no transcendent standards of justice. This led Marxist-Leninist states to create their own “conventional” justice: forcible redistribution of wealth, state theft, torture, murder, and so forth. The doctrine of the atonement and the transcendental standards of justice it requires will never permit this. Christian culture means a culture based on transcendent, divine—which is to say, Biblical—standards.

Hope

Finally, a Christian culture is a culture of faith and hope. Man is naturally a sinner; left to his own devices, the best that he will accomplish is the sinful society—not a utopia, but a dystopia. The atonement graphically relates to us that God has not left man to his own devices; with man, thank God, all things are not possible, but all things are possible with God (*Lk. 18:27*). Christ’s atonement was not designed to accomplish merely individual salvation, but its effects were calculated to extend to the entire realm of God’s creation (*Rom. 8:18-25*). This means that Christ’s redemptive work on the cross will roll back the effects of sin in time and history.⁴

Man’s only hope is salvation in Christ who has satisfied the terms of God’s justice. He satisfied this in his death, the atonement, which covered and took away man’s sin debt. This is the *only* means by which man can be reconciled to God, and the only system by which a godly culture can flourish.

¹ Leon Morris, “The Atonement,” in ed., Carl F. H. Henry, *Basic Christian Doctrines* (New York, 1962), 152.

² H. D. McDonald, *The Atonement of the Death of Christ* (Grand Rapids, 1985).

³ Rousas John Rushdoony, *Law and Society* (Vallecito, 1982), 74-75.

⁴ Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, TX, 1990), 10-12 and *passim*.

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For more information, please contact Chalcedon’s Administrative Assistant,
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Keeping the Trust

By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

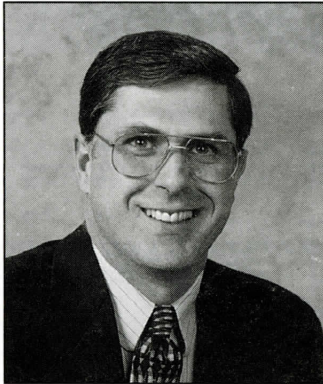
That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

(1 Timothy 6:17-21)



Paul tells us to charge those that are rich in this world. Wealth has always been a cause of division and distinction, and always will be. It can be seen as capital, affluence, power, or reward. We measure so much in terms of wealth: labor, value, tithes, offerings, savings, profit, loss,

success, and failure. Wealth is as necessary a gauge for those without it as it is for those with it. We are not, therefore, charged to warn the rich about riches, but about the pride and the false sense of security that riches can breed.

The false sense of security that often grows from the power that riches convey belies the fact that such riches are only “in this world.” When we have no vision of our ultimate place in God’s scheme, we presume that we are our own creatures and that our destiny is in our own hands. The real wealth we can touch is then equated with who we are. Without an understanding of our creaturehood and responsibility before God, it is all too easy to think that wealth itself defines us and our importance. Such thinking transfers providence from God to wealth, which we trust as our security. But trust in riches involves no creaturely gratitude. Instead we develop a high-minded pride—we are rich!

Instead Paul tells us to trust in God—not an impersonal idea or philosophical starting point, but “the living God.” Once we understand that all good things come from God and that riches can represent a great

susceptibility to his judgement, we will cease to measure ourselves in terms of our wealth and we will cure a major cause of pride. God gives us “richly all things to enjoy.” Our security and pride must be in the knowledge of God’s bountiful care.

We must not hesitate to be scornful of all knowledge that offers a false view of the world or depreciates our accountability to our Creator.

In addition to trusting in the living God, Paul tells us to “be rich in good works.” The reward for good works is “treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Mt. 6:20). We must remember, no matter what our earthly estate, that God hath “chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him” (Jas. 2:5). Wealth is not an evil, but love of wealth *is* an evil. We must remember the heavenly treasure accumulated by Paul, who wrote of ministers of the gospel “as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Cor. 6:10).

Good works include charity, yes. But they include all obediences to God and works in the kingdom of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing on earth, including wealth, is eternal; but the treasures we lay up in heaven are a “good foundation against the time to come.”

Now Paul gets to the heart of things. He summarizes his advice to the young minister by saying, “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust.” He means to stand fast in the grace in which he was called to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is saying, “Look at the big picture, Timothy. Stay faithful to the message.” He tells Timothy to preserve and protect what was given to him as a sacred trust.

In order to stay faithful to his trust, Timothy had to avoid two errors. The first was “profane and vain

babbings”; the second was “oppositions of science falsely so-called.” Pretentious talk for the sake of ostentation impedes real knowledge in any field. Some prefer to use words to change the gospel into an academic game of Scrabble. They evaluate the words of Scripture rather than expound them. They seek to ascribe importance to their own scholarship rather than the word of God, which, they seem to think, can only be properly understood by experts such as themselves. Vain babblings are the words of arrogant expositors.

When Paul warned against the second error of “science falsely so called,” he referred to all false philosophies and concepts of truth. This phrase is often used to refer to

evolution. That is certainly a modern example, but Paul’s warning included any false source of knowledge. In his day, Greek philosophy would have been an obvious source of so-called knowledge. We must not hesitate to be scornful of all knowledge that offers a false view of the world or depreciates our accountability to our Creator. The danger of vain babblings and so-called knowledge is that they cause men to err concerning the faith (*v. 21*). If we stay faithful to that gospel committed to our trust, and “follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (*v. 11*), we will avoid the errors of false knowledge and be rich in good works.

THEONOMY VS. ANTINOMIANISM

In Matthew 5:18, Christ said, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

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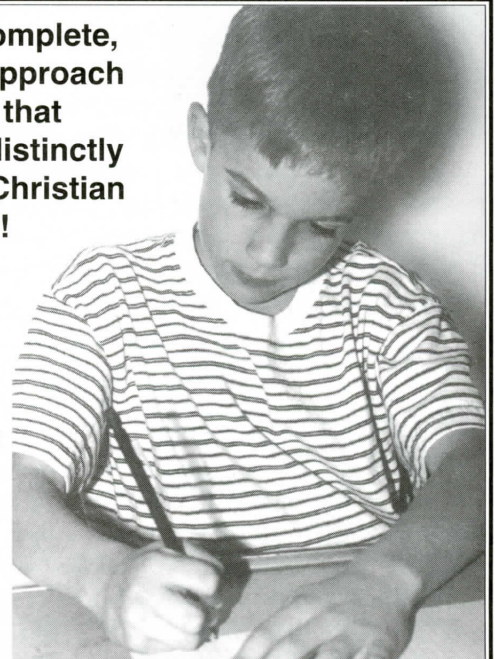
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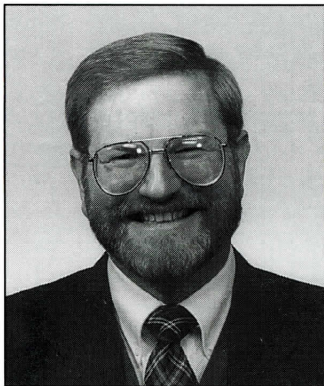
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Basics of the Atonement

By Rev. Brian M. Absbire



As a truly Reformed sort of fellow who follows the regulative principle of worship, I believe that if God does not COMMAND something in worship, then it is FORBIDDEN in worship. Yet it is sometimes difficult to work out the regulative principle in the church. Sure, we don't

need no stinking drama in our church; but what do you do with traditional Christian holidays that have no specific Biblical warrant? God did not command them. Is it lawful to recognize them? My solution is to get rid of Christmas Eve and Good Friday services (the Lord's Day is the only required meeting day of the saints). But is that enough? Some people do not think so. They think I am compromising with the "Roman Whore" (their EXACT words) if I preach on the incarnation in December!

Several years ago I published an article in the *Report* justifying why I thought it appropriate to celebrate Christmas as a civic and family holiday (but NOT as a religious holiday). I said it was lawful for people (if they wanted) to have a Christmas tree, give presents, and sing Christmas carols. (Why can I lawfully celebrate my wife's birthday but not my Lord's?)

As a result of that article, I received numerous blasts from other "truly Reformed" types. One indignant brother sent me a copy of his church bulletin to show me what a truly Reformed order of worship looked like. The church bulletin was from October and prominently featured an advertisement for their annual Reformation Day Sunday celebration with special guest speaker, potluck dinner, and children's costume party. I asked my esteemed brother where in Scripture he received permission to celebrate the Reformation as a special day? He answereth not. It seems that it is perfectly fine to preach a message on patriotism on Memorial Day, a special sermon on Proverbs 31 on Mother's Day, and haul out all the stops for Reformation Day, but we mustn't preach about the crucifixion around Easter!

I weary of such pharisaical nit-picking and am sometimes sorely tempted to buy a few crosses and candles as decorations for my church just to see how loudly I can make some people squeal! But I won't. I'll be big about it. I'll not intentionally offend a brother (unnecessarily!). Instead, as Easter approaches, I'll preach a series of

messages on the atonement. Something along the lines of the below. . .

The Need for the Atonement

Our God is a holy God, pure and blameless. He cannot abide sin. "*Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, and thou canst not look on wickedness with favor*" (Hab. 1:13). Sin is a horrible stain on his creation. He must remove both sin and sinful men from his presence. Hence, "*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*" (Is. 59:2).

Furthermore, sin not only separates us from God, but from one another. Because of sin, men are "*alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds*" (Col. 1:21). Consequently, there awaits the unrepentant sinner only a "*certain, terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries of God*" (Heb. 10:27).

Because of sin, the entire earth is cursed (Gen. 3:17), subjected to futility, and longs to be set free from its slavery to corruption (Rom. 8:20-22). Not only are all of man's works affected by his sin, but also the very ground he stands on. Sin is a horrible stain on the perfect creation of God. What had been created "very good" has now become filled with corruption.

We are utterly unable to deal with our sin. We cannot hide from it, "*your sin will find you out*" (Num. 32:23). We cannot cleanse ourselves from it: "*Who can say I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin?*" (Pr. 20:9). We cannot make up for it with good works for "*by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight*" (Rom. 3:20).

Since there is no one who is without sin (1 Kin. 8:46; Ps. 14:3; Ec. 7:20; Mk. 10:18; Rom. 3:23; etc.), the entire human race is condemned before a holy and righteous God. Unless God chooses to do something, we are lost. He is holy; he cannot abide sin. He is immutable; he cannot change. But our God is also a God of compassion and lovingkindness. He himself redeems his people AND his creation by making atonement for their sins.

The Basis of Atonement: Sacrifice

The basic *term* for atonement is *kippur*, or covering. The basic *concept* is substitution; *i.e.*, God allows someone or something to receive the punishment due for our sin. The basic *content* of a sacrifice is blood, "for the life is in the blood." God instituted the ritual of sacrifice in the Garden of Eden. His promise to Adam and Eve was that the day they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they would die. His word had to be kept. After they sinned, he killed an animal and dressed them in its skin (Gen. 3:21). This act exemplified both covering and substitution: covering, because God covered their bodies, hiding their

nakedness/vulnerability; and substitution, because God substituted the life of the animal for their lives.

The second sacrifices in the Bible were Cain and Abel's: one acceptable to God, the other rejected by him (*Gen. 4:4-5*). It can be argued that Abel's sacrifice was accepted because it was an animal sacrifice; blood was shed. Cain's was rejected because as an offering of fruit and vegetables it was not a blood sacrifice.

The third sacrifice occurred when Noah offered burnt offerings to God for his salvation from the flood (*Gen. 8:20*). Here God instituted the practice of eating the flesh of animals (*Gen. 9:3*), including the flesh of the sacrifice. Thus the sacrifice literally becomes a part of man.

The next significant sacrifice occurred when God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac (*Gen. 22:1ff.*). This illustrates both the price that had to be paid (Abraham's promised son) and the fact that a substitution could be made (the animal that God provided).

During the deliverance of his people from bondage in Egypt (itself a picture of man's slavery to sin), God instituted two main sacrifices for Israel. The first was Passover, wherein an animal was sacrificed to redeem the first-born. Before the Exodus, a lamb was slain and its blood was painted on the door-posts of the house. God passed over the first-born in the house as he visited his wrath on Egypt. The second main sacrifice was Yom Kippur: the Day of Atonement. Each year an animal was sacrificed for the entire nation of Israel. On that day, the high priest put aside his priestly garments and wore a simple white garment. He first offered a bullock as a sin offering for the priesthood. After filling his censor with live coals, from the altar, he entered the Holy of Holies holding the bowl of blood from the bullock. He placed incense on the coals, sending a cloud of fragrant smoke over the mercy seat. He took blood from the bullock and sprinkled it over the mercy seat, making atonement for the priesthood. Then a goat was sacrificed as a sin offering for the people. The goat's blood was then sprinkled on the altar. The high priest laid his hands on a second goat that was driven into the desert where it symbolically carried away the sins of the people. Thus were the people's sins covered and a substitution made for them.

Atonement and the New Testament

The Old Testament sacrifice is a picture, a shadow, and an earthly copy of concrete realities, just as the New Testament sacraments are. Christ is the archetypical High Priest (*Heb. 7:26-27*) and therefore makes atonement for his people. "*For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God*" (*Heb. 9:24*).

The blood of animals could never be a real substitute for sin: "*For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*" (*Heb. 10:4*). But it did provide a picture and a promise of the coming Messiah. Hence, it is crucial to understand that in his death, Christ fulfilled all that the old sacrifices foreshadowed (*Mt. 26:28*). "*He was delivered up because of our transgressions*" (*Rom. 4:25*). His blood was shed for the "*behalf of many for forgiveness of sins*" (*Eph. 1:17*;

Col. 1:14). He made "*purification for sins*" (*Heb. 1:3*). "*He is the propitiation (i.e., sacrifice which turns away God's wrath) for our sins*" (*1 Jn. 2:2*). His blood is "*the blood of the new covenant*" (*1 Cor. 11:25*). Christ "*gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma*" (*Eph. 5:2*). "*Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed*" (*1 Cor. 5:7*). We were redeemed not with perishable things such as silver or gold "*but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ*" (*1 Pet. 1:19*). "*Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world*" (*Jn. 1:29*).

The death of Christ was representative for us: "*One died for all, therefore all died*" (*2 Cor. 5:14*). The death of Christ was a ransom, a price paid to buy a slave out of slavery: "*For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for man*" (*Mk. 10:45*). God "*made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God*" (*2 Cor. 5:21*). "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*" (*Isa. 53:5-6*).

The death of Christ reveals God's love for men: "*God demonstrates His own love for us in this, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (*Rom. 5:8*). "*God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son*" (*Jn. 3:16*).

Conclusions

The atonement ought to drive us to our knees in both humility and appreciation. If our great God hates sin so much, how dare we flirt with temptation? Even worse, how dare we deny our sin, or blame it on someone else or, even worse, try to atone for it through our own efforts? Sin is wicked, evil and repugnant; and we ought to hate it and forsake it even as our God does.

Second, since there is NO solution for sin apart from Christ's sacrifice, we must rest and trust in Jesus alone. The law ought to drive us to our knees in fearful anticipation of the righteous wrath of a holy and awesome God. But then the mercy and grace of God exalts us as he demonstrates through the cross his great love for his unlovely people. We are now new creations, with a new life, future and hope. "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (*2 Cor. 5:17*). We now have a whole new way of living and a new way of thinking because Jesus has made atonement for our sins.

The atonement ought to make us love our God in response. As a result of his sacrifice for us, how can we not give back to him everything? Our time, money, family, calling, everything we have comes from him and has been redeemed by him. Therefore we can say with David, "How do I love thy Law? It is my meditation all the day. . . ."

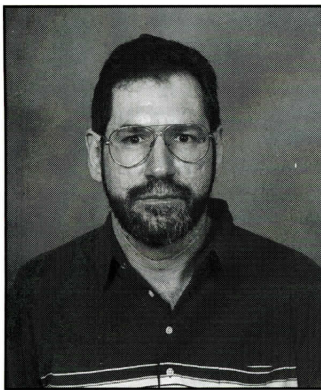
Only by grace can the mercy of God be given, only by faith can the mercy of God be received. "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*" (*Gal. 2:20*).

The Image of God and the Philosophy of History: A Neglected Aspect of the Theology of the Restored Image as it Bears on Preconsummate Eschatology

By Joseph P. Braswell

Introduction: Cornelius Van Til's first main interpreter to a wider audience was Rousas John Rushdoony. His *By What Standard?* (available from Chalcedon) remains a most readable and incisive introduction to Van Til's thought. Chalcedon has based much of its ministry on the epochal ideas articulated by Van Til and has worked constantly to highlight his theological perspective before a largely effete and compromising Western Christianity.

One of the prime Van Tilian thinkers today is Joseph Braswell, whose writings we often feature. Men with the combination of Braswell's native intelligence and theological conviction are rare today. The following article on the image of God in man brilliantly summarizes the Van Tilian perspective on this foundational issue.



The kingdom of God is the eschatological goal of covenant-history, the overarching and unifying theme of the history of revelation. The story told in Holy Scripture is the story of the coming of the kingdom of God, God's work in establishing his kingly reign "on earth as it is in heaven." According to

Dan McCartney, this kingdom-theme is integrally bound up with the Bible's teaching concerning the image of God.¹ The glory of the kingdom is the eschatologically consummate glory of the image of God and man's exercise of vice-gerential dominion to the glory of God.²

God's Image in Man

To understand the concept of the image of God we first must distinguish between two aspects of this image: the *stative* and the *dynamic* sense of the image. The

former refers to the fact that man *is* the image, that this is a metaphysical *given* of his being whereby he is a creaturely reproduction or *replica* of God. This is a constant of man's being. In distinction from this stative sense, the latter refers to the normative dimension of an imaging-response—imaging as man's ethical calling. According to this calling or demand, man is expected to *reflect* God by expressing an analogous *moral character* in all his activity and behavior as the image of God. This latter sense of the image and likeness is variable in the sense that man's character was to mature over time unto a fuller expression of God-likeness, a greater degree of glory-reflection. The stative image is a gift that is the "presupposition" of the demand and task of the dynamic image-ideal.³ Man by virtue of being the image ought to image God self-consciously, and man fulfills himself in a genuine self-realization as he matures in this ethical imaging of God in glory-likeness. The representation ought to act as God's representative by faithfully employing all his image-capacities in an expression of godliness, acting for the glory of God and doing all things in the name of God.⁴

Effects of the Fall

What man lost in the Fall is the ability he originally possessed of that dynamic imaging which answers to the normative image-calling of the covenantal demand for holiness unto the Lord and right response to God's revelation. He has lost his ethical capacity to image God in glory-likeness, in covenantal activity that expresses godly character. He has lost the power to fulfill his glory-reflective vocation of officially representing God as vicegerent in the exercise of godly dominion. He has come short of the glory of God.⁵ As the metaphysical (stative) image, man is a covenant-being, a covenant-responder, and as such his every activity is metaphysically analogical in nature. This state of affairs has not changed—and cannot. Man cannot but respond to the covenant of God, because he *is* the image. However, he ought to respond appropriately, as a covenant-keeper, in order to express in self-consciousness the glory-reflective image-likeness of being holy as God is holy. What has changed in the lapsarian situation is that this covenant-being can no longer respond obediently to his covenantal-religious

calling. He is now, as the *ichabod*-image, a covenant-breaker who responds in self-conscious repudiation of his task; his response is invariably one of rebellion, a refusal to heed the covenantal call of duty to image God ethically in obedient sonship-service. Because of his sublapsarian (post-fall) condition of total depravity, his every thought, word, and deed is an apostate response of radical disobedience—transgression. He cannot do good (inability); he cannot be subject to the law of God. He cannot analogue the prescriptive will of God which stands as the norm of authentic image-behavior, though he nevertheless cannot but analogue the creative power and the dominion-activity of God according to his metaphysical determination as the image of God whose being cannot be metaphysically autonomous and must analogue the decretive will of God as this determines nature and history. There remains in human activity an analogy of form (creative power) but not of content (moral character). Man still imposes his will upon the world in that analogically creative dominion-activity that transforms nature into culture, but his will is not ethically oriented by a love for God to the self-conscious seeking of the glory of God.

Man's Constitutional Covenantalism

By virtue of his being in the stative sense the image-replica of God, man's very being is constituted such that he is formally structured—fitted—to the covenant task given to him by God. The fulfillment of that task is man's proper role and function. The fulfillment of that role of being-unto-God as the divine image in the fullest sense (including the glory-likeness to which he is called) is the fulfillment of his very being, a being that has been designed to be self-realized and consummated in his realization of his calling. This vocational task involves dominion. Indeed, dominion centrally and constitutively characterizes the meaning of the image as an official investiture of vicegerency, of status or office as God's appointed representative (a steward). Man's dominion replicates God's kingship. Appointment to this office under God calls man to serve as the faithful vassal of the Suzerain, to rule in God's name and by his authority, exercising with responsibility to God a delegated authority from God. The image is by nature a dominion-being who is driven by the radical impulse to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over it, to humanize the world such that it is made to express the stamp of man's image and reflect human glory. Such dominion-labor is an objectified (or externalized) *praxis*-expression of man's image-subjectivity (the existential dimension of his being) in its replication of the divine kingship and the divine creativity.

Man is by his created nature inescapably analogically creative; he is reproductively re-creative in the image-expression of the Creator-God. Man is a workman or craftsman who replicates on his own level

of action the archetypical divine workmanship in creative self-expression. The capacity for dominion (and all that this involves) is as such a given of man's essential being, a gift bestowed in his creation as the image of God, an "ontical *a priori*" or law of his being. Because of this metaphysical determination, man "instinctively" forms nature into culture and creates a human reality out of the materials of the world, making it his world (a tamed and ordered environment of familiar and comfortable surroundings suited to his wants and needs—a dwelling-place in which he can feel at home). This metaphysical given of a dominion-exercising impulse in man is correlated to his divinely-intended task of exercising dominion under God as an equipping thereto; it is an inherent capacity which is a necessary condition for fulfillment of the demand, for the stative image is the "presupposition" of the reflective image (ethical glory-likeness), and the dominion-impulse lies at the heart of the stative image.

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and use.*

Man's Inescapable Covenant Action

The given of man's nature is designed to suit him for the fulfillment of that covenantal task as the fulfillment of himself in his calling (self-realization). It is thus his very nature—integral to what he essentially is as man *qua* the image of God—to act according to this inner determination that defines him in his innermost being as an analogical creator. This impulse to expressively externalize his subjectivity, to impress his image upon the world-material and produce human culture, is so constitutively integral to his being the image of God that he cannot but function in terms of this basic capacity and constraint that sets for him his historical task and

literally impels him onward according to the dynamic of historical realization in temporal reality.

Thus, as a temporal being situated in time, man unfolds himself—actualizes his being—progressively in a dynamic process of gradual self-realization, growing and developing over time unto maturation. Man is a work in progress, an incomplete and open being, directed to the future and completing himself over the span of his entire life. He is a process-being in a dynamic state of change—of *becoming*. He becomes as a goal-oriented or goal-directed being according to his project, by which he projects himself in his creativity. He is restlessly driven by this fundamental impulse of historical existence that is the internal law of his being unto idionomic self-actualization through historical city-building (culture-formation, labor) unto a maturation that accords with his ethical deportment as a covenant-responsible being (responding either as covenant-keeper or as covenant-breaker).

Accordingly, history, as the field of human activity in city-building, is shaped by, and discloses, the heart of man (out of which are the issues of life) in its religious orientation, whether informed by theonomy or by autonomy. All cultural activity is expressive either of the historical project of the City of God or that of the apostate City of Man.⁶ This must be so because every act of man is necessarily a response to the revelation of God,⁷ whether of obedience or rebellion. Every moment of man's consciousness is a response to covenant facts (which, as covenantal, are *normative* in nature), and the specific response evoked by these theistic facts (whether that of obedience or disobedience) is made according to man's image-determination as covenant-responder. Man at every turn, at every moment and in every circumstance, unavoidably responds to the inescapably ubiquitous, pervasive covenantal revelation of God that confronts man in every fact of creation. *Every* fact man encounters challenges man covenantally, revealing itself as a task to be performed (how man is to use it, what function it serves) and thereby evoking a response from him—a decision by him—as to what he shall do with it, how he shall react to it. Every situation raises a question for man as to what he ought to do, what is the proper course of action, what action will serve his good (as he perceives that to be). Man, in approaching any fact of creation, uses it either to the glory of God by consciously submitting to God's preinterpretation of it or else he seizes it for his own autonomous project (in service to his autonomous self-interest). It cannot be otherwise.

Because man is dynamically in action as a projection of himself into the world *qua* sphere of historical activity, because he is self-expressively engaged in *praxis qua* his impress of re-creative power upon his environment, he is always active in the concretization/effecting either of his autonomous interpretation or of the self-consciously analogical (theonomic) reinterpretation of his situational context as it calls him to covenantal-responsible action.

Whether inspired by the spirit of theonomy or that of autonomy, of covenant-keeping or covenant-breaking, he necessarily acts to transform nature (the given), producing either the culture of the City of Man or that of the City of God according to the specific religious vision that informs and motivates his heart (one determined by either sin or grace).

God's Facts Limit Man

Of course, the circumstances of the situation set before men themselves serve as constraints that effectively circumscribe the potential of human action at every turn, limiting the range of possibilities—of possible outcomes—that are open to the finite powers of his creativity. Man's action is held in check by the limits inherent in the given, the initial conditions within the situation he confronts and upon which he seeks to act transformatively, and these circumstances are determined by the providence of God. Although would-be autonomous man attempts to impose his own original (autonomous) meanings in his *praxis*-interpretation of created reality, the facts, as God-interpreted facts, are not wholly malleable, are not amenable to every imagined interpretation and use. They stubbornly resist many manipulations; they refuse to submit to many projects. They are determinate in character and can only be manipulated by man within a narrowly circumscribed range of applications. For example, water cannot be used for fuel,⁸ nor can rocks be used for food. The function various things can serve is limited; their range of potential uses is not simply dependent upon the creative imagination of man but is set by their very nature which man must discover and respect. Man must yield to a substantial degree to the way things *are*, for the degree to which things yield to his will is a bounded variable with very definite (and relatively narrow) parameters. Discovering the way things work, their properties and functions, and conforming or adapting to a predetermined state of affairs is vital to a successful cultural project. This means that the world must be met on its own ground—*i.e.*, upon the metaphysical common ground of theistic facticity—if man is to exercise dominion over it.

Thus, the world yields itself to man's dominion only as he knows it *truly*, as he discovers the divinely preinterpreted meaning of things and rightly applies what is therein disclosed regarding their intended functions (their created essence). The suppression of natural revelation by fallen man accordingly renders the facts opaque to him (relative to the degree of successful suppression) as the facts, operating under God's law and within his order, refuse autonomous man's misinterpretations and illegitimate manipulations. To the extent that man disobeys natural revelation by resisting what the facts would disclose of themselves (which is a revelation of their place in the covenantal task, their role and function in the plan of God in which they have their meaning as facts), man is hindered in his dominion over nature. God-facts

inevitably resist man's false interpretations commensurate to man's resistance of the duty they confront man with according to the will of their Creator, and only by some degree of submission to the *a priori* meaning of the facts (a partial submission made possible by common grace) can man progress in using them as material for his cultural project.

Man at every turn, at every moment and in every circumstance, unavoidably responds to the inescapably ubiquitous, pervasive covenantal revelation of God that confronts man in every fact of creation.

The Benefits of Common Grace

Thus, even the progress of the City of Man lends itself to the advancement of the City of God in history as the fruit of the rebels' apostate labors, despite the would-be autonomous intention behind those labors, issues by virtue of common grace and divine providence in true scientific and technological advance that can be utilized for the glory of God by his people. The ungodly cannot help but create capital that ultimately will serve the City of God; they do so despite themselves and their wicked aims. They unwittingly fulfill to some extent the covenantal task despite their self-conscious repudiation of it, despite their pursuit of humanistic culture and a secular city. God's world is a *kosmos*, an ordered system; it is a *law-order*, and man can survive (let alone prosper and flourish) within it only to the extent that he adapts himself to its intrinsic law-structure, to the extent that he submits himself to the truth as an ought. Fallen man, despite his foolish and darkened imagination, must conform himself to reality and deal with the real world, rather than living in a delusional state of his imagined godhood. He must obey the laws of the world if he is to exercise dominion. Although fallen man incessantly attempts to wrest the world to his own autonomous ends, to make it a servant to him in his revolt against God, it not only resists this misuse and strives against the false project, but it (in supreme irony) actually serves to pull man back and direct him to proper applications, providing him with a reality-check and restraining his delusional

pursuits from being consistently carried out to their end.

Man survives only by skill, by know-how, and that practical knowledge involves a more or less correct grasp of how God's world actually functions according to the governance of God. The absolutely depraved could not function; only God's common grace allows for the success of any of the rebels' labors in gaining control of their environment. Thus, every genuine advance in knowledge is ontically suited to serve godly culture when appropriated by the people of God who have lawful claim to all things as their rightful inheritance. All of science and technology can be interpreted and applied to serve the cause of God and truth under those who exercise godly dominion. "The wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just," and even the wrath of man will praise God as useful for his glory. Covenant-breakers create tools of dominion for the City of God despite themselves; every "success" of the City of Man, despite its self-deluded pretensions to the contrary, is but slave-labor (and alienated labor) expended in the capitalizing of the historical City of God so as to assure its prosperity to the glory of God.

Every confrontation between man and his world (subject and object) involves a synthesis and transformation. Neither man nor the facts he encounters remain unchanged, unaffected by the encounter. The relation between subject and object is by nature dynamically interactive. Man is altered in this confrontation because he is challenged anew with his covenantal task by the revelation of God and its evocation of a covenant response from the heart of man to this state of affairs. Man thus grows in knowledge and responsibility, confirming the state of his heart in its theonomous or autonomous orientation. So too, the facts are transformed by the assertion of man's dominating will upon them to subdue them to human ends (whether godly or ungodly in ultimate point of reference). Man is projected upon his situation and leaves his imprint as he turns the natural thing into a cultural artifact, a product of human labor. Yet it is not simply the facts of creation in their purely natural, raw or primitive state that are God-facts; even the "artificial" facts—that which is man-made or refined, formed from the "raw material" of nature, the products of prior syntheses and transformations—remain revelational in character, thus continuing the dynamic dialectic that impels man forward in covenant-responsive historical activity. Cultural and technological products also witness to their proper applications and uses, ethically challenging man to put them to good and appropriate use (for godly purposes), rather than perverting them to evil ends, according to the hatred for God's creation-order that burns in the depraved heart of the rebel. Each human achievement reveals itself as a gift of God, thus continuing to point man to how it can and should serve the cultural advance of the City of God and prodding him to be wise in his cultural stewardship, to seek the kingdom of God as *summum*

bonum in that covenantal obedience by which man can consciously glorify God and enjoy him forever. Metaphysically, all the facts remain in common between the two cities; the world ever remains God's world and truly subject only to godly dominion, claimable by those renewed images of God who act as faithful vassals of the true Suzerain. The facts have true meaning only in terms of kingdom-pursuit, each advance in human knowledge bearing witness to the kingdom's ultimate triumph and the futility of metaphysical revolt.

The Impossibilities of Cultural Passivity

From all this we see that cultural retreat, cultural passivity and quiescence, is impossible. Man is inherently an active historical agent, a culture-producing being who is actively engaged in the world. If man does not grow, he dies. We see as well that, because God is sovereign, this relentless drive that is the mainspring of historical action is directed to true cultural progress, despite fallen man's false cultural project and all his vain efforts to subvert God's order. We have thus seen that the stage is set, even in the fallen world, for the eventual victory of the servants of God. When God reintroduces the City of God into history by the Covenant of Redemption, he clearly intends for the original Cultural Mandate, the call to dominion, to be fulfilled; he intends history (the arena in which his victory was accomplished) to reveal the success of the City of God in realizing kingdom-culture, lest the creation be rendered meaningless by its failure to realize itself in terms of the design of the creation-covenantal plan. Should the meaning of the facts *not* be fulfilled by the fruition of man's covenantal project, by his use of the facts in accomplishing his cultural task, we could not speak of creation being redeemed and delivered, but Scripture so speaks (*Rom. 8:19-22*), and so must we. History must reveal the victory of the kingdom as that kingdom makes its presence known in history unto the filling of the earth with the glory of God. It is given to man as the renewed image of God to show forth that glory in all his activities and endeavors, in all areas of his life, as God's priest-king and an instrument of righteousness.

¹ Dan G. McCartney, "Ecce Homo: The Coming of the Kingdom as the Restoration of Human Vicegerency," *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994), 1-21.

² Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, 1980) *passim*.

³ In traditional terminology we speak of the image of God in a "wider" and "narrower" sense. Obviously, the narrow sense depends upon the wider sense, supplementing it or pouring further determinative content into the wider concept. The *stative* image roughly corresponds to the wider sense of the image, while the *reflective* sense, dealing with the content of a specifically godly character (true holiness and righteousness, glory-likeness), roughly corresponds to the narrow sense. The stative image is a necessary condition for the expression of glory-likeness; the ability to respond in obedience is contingent upon the ability to respond as a free-moral agent.

⁴ For all that has been said thus far concerning the two-fold sense of the image of God I am indebted first and foremost to M. G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 26-34, and, secondly, to John M. Frame's comments on the two-fold sense of Van Til's "analogical activity" in Frame, *Van Til the Theologian* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1976), 20.

⁵ See the comments on *Rom. 3:23* in James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Waco, TX, 1988), 167-8.

⁶ Henry Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Philadelphia, 1959), chaps. 5 and 6.

⁷ Cornelius Van Til, "Nature and Scripture," in Paul Wooley, ed., *The Infallible Word: A Symposium*, 3rd rev. ed. (Presbyterian and Reformed [1946], 1967), 263-301.

⁸ I realize this illustration of common sense breaks down out of the field of everyday, ordinary experience. We can indeed turn water into fuel by breaking up the molecule into hydrogen and oxygen. Still, because of this chemical change, we are no longer dealing with water; water itself cannot be a fuel, and no amount of physical change to it will make it such. Man ought not to pour water upon his fire if his intent is to keep it burning.

Joseph Braswell has done undergraduate and graduate work in philosophy at the University of South Florida, but his real interest is in theology and Biblical studies. He has published several articles in various journals (including the Westminster Theological Journal, The Journal of Christian Reconstruction, and the Chalcedon Report). He currently resides in Palatka, Florida and is engaged in research and writing. He can be reached at 1520 Prospect St., Palatka, FL 32177-5935.

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A Christian Lawyer and the Media

By Byron Snapp



On first thought, many Christians would conclude that a lawyer and the media would spell double trouble for Christianity. Herb Titus, a Harvard graduate, has a different idea. The noted constitutional lawyer and author uses his hour-long weekday radio program to discuss and advance a Christian world view as

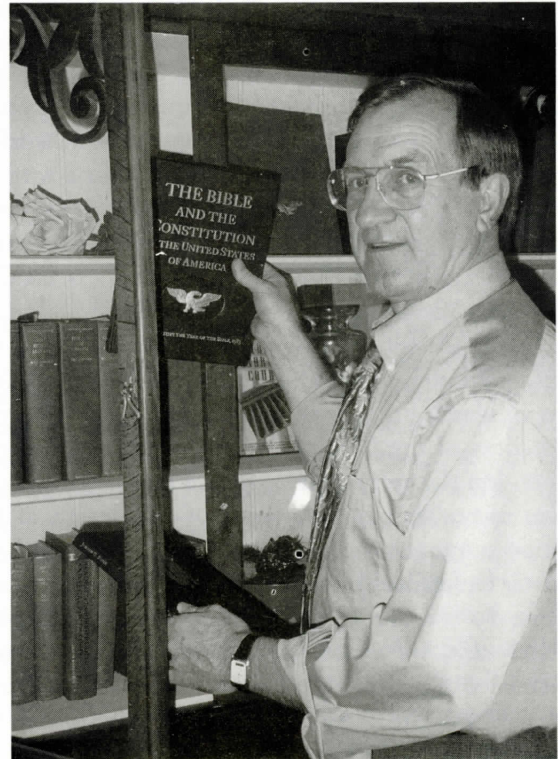
well as Christian thinking in the field of law. The program, "That's the Law," is aired on almost 20 stations from Florida to Wisconsin and New York to South Dakota. For those with a sound card, it can be accessed on the Internet at www.vcyamerica.org.

In a recent interview, Dr. Titus stated that his desire to do this program originated in 1997. As he studied Scripture, he was particularly impressed with Paul's words in Ephesians 5:16, "making the most of your time, because the days are evil." Staring at a plate full of responsibilities, he realized the great commitment for an hour-long program, five days each week. Yet his appetite was whetted as he saw this tremendous opportunity to apply Christianity to current legal issues. Looking back from a year's vantage point, he is very thankful that he seized the opportunity the Lord gave him.

Regular listeners are well acquainted with the program's format: Each broadcast is devoted to a particular theme. A guest who has some involvement or knowledge with that theme is interviewed. The interview is followed by calls from listeners. The program closes with a two and one-half minute summary by Titus as he brings a Christian world view perspective to the subject discussed that day.

A prolific writer of articles and books, including *God, Man and Law: The Biblical Principles*, Titus recognizes the advantages and hindrances of this electronic media. Radio broadcasts make an immediate impact on listeners and reach people who would not sit down and read a book, in addition to reaching travelers and busy housewives. Some people are motivated to read material and think through issues they otherwise would not touch. On the downside, messages conveyed through the radio are fleeting. The audience cannot rewind the program to better understand and reflect on what they have just heard, nor underline portions to which they can later refer.

Recent programs have focused on numerous wide-ranging subjects. Naturally, the impeachment process has received necessary attention. Titus worked as a legal consultant for Congressman Bob Barr in 1997, aiding the Congressman in those early months when he was one of the lone voices calling for the president's impeachment.



Herb Titus

The program has also addressed international issues such as the legality of Chilean dictator Pinochet's extradition from England to stand trial under a Spanish judge in Spain. Closer to home, the program has addressed individual fault and hate crimes. On every broadcast, Titus seeks "to bring a Biblical common law understanding to these legal issues" and "show how practical that understanding is in resolving these questions." Some topics extend outside law and politics, such as a recent discussion of C. S. Lewis' writings; a variety of cultural issues have also been discussed. However the essential emphasis is on God's law as set forth in God's word.

When asked his assessment of opportunities for Christians to influence the judicial system, Titus stated that Christian lawyers can make an impact, "if those lawyers are properly trained and properly grounded in a

Biblical world view of law. There are precious few Christian lawyers who have that training." He believes there is an opportunity "to influence judges through educating them after they come on the bench, but we have not yet penetrated that particular arena very effectively as a Christian community. The education of judges is pretty much in the hands of people who do not subscribe to the Scriptures as truth. I am afraid that we have not taken advantage of the opportunities we might have through such organizations professionally as the Christian Legal Society to do precisely that."

Titus has been pleased with response to "That's the Law." He has received written encouragement as well as telephone calls from listeners who express deep appreciation for these broadcasts. He said, "Primarily our listeners tell us that they have not heard this kind of information before. They have not heard how the Bible relates to law and politics in America. We have had a number of people express great thanksgiving for the thought-provoking nature of the program. It really opens up their minds to see how Scripture applies even in

modern American law and politics. For many people this is the first time they have ever heard anything like this."

Readers interested in getting Dr. Titus' program aired on an area station can call 1-800-729-9829 for further information. Tapes of past programs can be obtained to allow station managers to become acquainted with and interested in broadcasting this daily program.

While VCY/America, a non-profit foundation, provides technical and engineering support, the production support is supplied by the Forecast Foundation (2400 Carolina Road, Chesapeake, VA 23322), also a non-profit educational organization. Gifts to both are tax deductible. The program celebrated its first anniversary on March 2.

Byron Snapp is an Associate Pastor at Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Church in Hampton, Virginia. A native of Virginia, he graduated from King College in Bristol, Tennessee (B.A. History) and from Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi (M. Div.). He has held pastorates in Mississippi, South Carolina, as well as Virginia. He and his wife, Janey, reside in Newport News, Virginia.

"The Christian Right suffered from many of the same flaws as the Church itself. A lack of vision and profound misreading of the needs of our generation, an ineffective demonstration of love and compassion, a misunderstanding of the relationship of service and leadership and an inability to articulate a Christianity that mandates rather than just suggests involvement.

"Motivated by a Godly compassion, we must learn to demonstrate our faith through acts of service if we are to effectively evangelize others by the strength of our witness. God's love working in and through us in an observable manner testifies to His presence more than anything we might say."

"Very few people could have written this book. The author had to be an insider in the New Right; he had to disengage from it long enough to develop a brutally honest perspective; and, most importantly, he had to have a vision for the future, based on following Christ's priorities, not ours. Colonel Doner has done this, and done it brilliantly. *The Samaritan Strategy*, direct, forceful, and compelling, will profoundly affect the Church's agenda as we enter the 1990's.

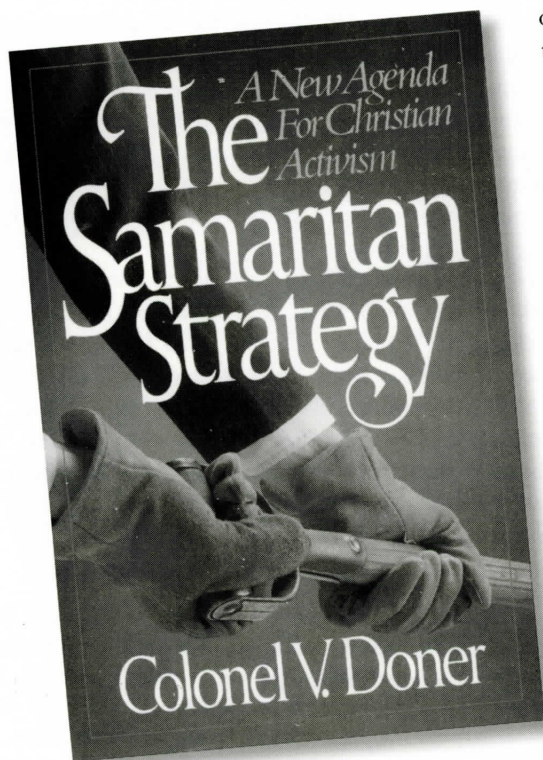
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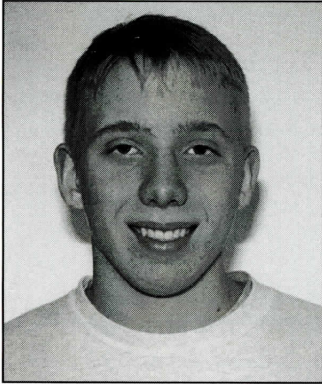
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Public Schools in America Take a Downward Slide

By Russ Warren



What was the original purpose of the school in America? Was it to send everyone, no matter what profession he aspired to, to a university? Was it to make children humanistic puppets of the state before they reached the age of 10? Or was the reason for something much more holy and Christian in origin? That is where it started! Originally, the

purpose of schools was to teach children to read so that they could read the Bible! What a long way we have come, when the Supreme Court can arbitrarily decide to outlaw the Bible in those institutions!

I am currently attending a secular high school, and for much of my life was not a Christian. Now that the Father has led me to be a Reformed believer, I look back on my life at school and look at what these schools did, how their fall came, and where they are going.

When I was in elementary school, I was young and “innocent.” I believed everything the teachers told me because my parents said to. As a young man now, I see the humanistic, statist trash they were hurling into my impressionable years. A key ingredient of their propaganda is the backward concept of self-esteem. Ask any student in the secular system and he will tell you that he has lived through years of hearing about this. It is all based on psycho-heresy propagated by Freud, Jung, and other “greats” in psychology. This statist doctrine can be summed up by saying: No one is perfect; therefore, you must be proud of what you do, even if it is wrong. Even if you commit an action so heinous that a newspaper won’t print it—be proud, be happy. This is what I was taught for so many years. When I open my Bible, I see that the doctrine of self-esteem is a glaring contradiction to the Faith (*Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:16*, etc.). It is the first building block in making a pathetic, worthless, secular “Christian.” From what I see, the public schools are doing a great job. Take away sin and its consequences, and you have a Genesis 3:5 on your hands! They make us to be gods, the deciders of our own destinies.

The next doctrine of the public school is the utter denial of the Biblical Faith. In elementary school it wasn’t that bad; we were even exhorted to go to church. However, once I set foot inside my high school’s doors as a new believer, I was under attack. Right now I am researching a paper to

present to my school; it will show the utter falseness of the public school’s teachings about the Puritans and Reformers. The public schools took all of the information about these godly Christians and compacted it, twisted it, distorted it, so that the students hate anyone who believes the Bible. One of my teachers called Luther an “Anti-Semite!” Any serious student of Luther would know this to be false: Luther (like any serious Christian!) just hated the idea of God being blasphemed by anyone. However, godless teachers know the power of Christ through these men, so they must make them look bad. My teachers have criticized me for being, in essence, a Puritan.

The last doctrine of the State’s Church (the state school) is that of evolution. So many students I know have to compromise their faith for alleged science. No one even gives creation a second look.

All of this ended for me last year. The Lord brought me into his covenant and set me free. Knowing that the Lord must win the battle, I am working against the humanists in my school. Gary DeMar states, “Reclamation of multiple authorities comes about when the individual assumes his responsibilities under God and thoroughly transforms his family, and working with other like-minded individuals, transforms his school, church, vocation, local community, state, and national civil government” (DeMar, *Ruler of the Nations*, 1987). The family must take up a program of self-government under God’s law and reform (or reconstruct) the family according to the dictates of God’s law. After that the Statist Church, the public school, will come crashing down. The Christian schools that arise to challenge and surpass its educational and civil standards will replace it. Inner-city schools that are decreasing in educational value (even though tax dollars are being pumped into them) will lose students to the schools that offer safety, the law of God, and education that does not deny the total depravity of man. This is not a fight of weapons or violence, but a fight of ideologies. It is fought with the weapons of the Bible, the mind, and the determination of Christians to reclaim society. No bloodshed is needed by any party; victory will come by a gradual process as the kingdom of God spreads as prescribed in the word of God.

Russ Warren is a 16-year-old student at Westside High School in Omaha, NE. He plans to attend Covenant College once he has graduated from high school. He attends Messiah Church (PCA), a new church in the Omaha area. He hopes one day to go into the pastorate. Russ has an email address at rvwarren1@home.com and a web site at <http://members.truepath.com/CRSW6>.

Guilt, Atonement and Freedom

(Reprinted from *The Roots of Reconstruction*,

Position Paper No. 43, Copyright 1991, R. J. Rushdoony)

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in his famous soliloquy, says at one point, "Conscience does make cowards of us all." In this sentence, Shakespeare summed up an ancient awareness of the corrosive effects of a bad conscience. Guilty men pay a price: they lose the power to be free. Being enslaved to sin, they become outwardly slaves as well. As our Lord says, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant [or, slave] of sin." However, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (*Jn. 8:34, 36*).

When the Russian Revolution began, only a very small minority of the people favored the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks, however, led by Lenin, preached envy and hatred on every possible occasion. When their takeover began, many millions were ready to exploit the situation to loot shops and homes. Having done this, they were guilty partners to the revolution and thus had little moral grounds to fight the Bolshevik power. Many years later, an older man said sadly, "We brought judgment upon ourselves."

With World War II, Stalin, fearing more than anything else his own subjects, encouraged the most vicious behavior by his advancing troops. Everything was done to incite them to rape, murder, and loot. The Germans were provoked to brutality in every possible way. As Nikolai Tolstoy says, in *Stalin's Secret War* (1982), "Stalin went out of his way to invite Nazi ill-treatment and later extermination of Russian prisoners-of-war" (261). He knew that the reaction to this would be greater brutality by the Soviet troops.

By so doing, Stalin demoralized his own men. How could they, after the war, fight against the horrors of Stalin and communism when they themselves had been guilty of like brutalities? How could they stand against Stalin's evil when they themselves had been so readily and brutally evil? A bad conscience had disarmed them.

Guilt has always been a useful and basic tool of tyranny and false power. Over the years, I have encountered situations where a husband or wife tries secretly and covertly to push their spouse into adultery. The purpose is to give them a bad conscience which will enable the manipulator to dominate the erring partner. In one case, a wife, failing to push her husband into adultery, became violent and mentally unstable because she had been unable to use guilt to control him.

This power is well known to evil politicians. A guilty people are a more readily controlled people. Hence, such politicians are prone to creating guilt. We have heard much in the past generation about hunger in America,

even to "statistics" on the number of the hungry. That this is a myth has been shown more than once, to no avail. We are given horror stories about how exploitive we are, in order to make us more readily exploitable. The purpose of a vast amount of political oratory is to create guilt in the people at large and all who oppose them. Too many "liberals" are people who feel guilty for things they never did while feeling no guilt for unhappy things done.

It is very difficult for a Christian to speak before certain types of audiences without being indicted for things totally unrelated to his subject. To cite one example, one questioner (or indicter) declared that no Christian had a right to speak, given the treatment of the Indians! The fact is that, very often, the only friends the Indians had were Christians. Most of the men on the frontier were lawless men, runaways from the law and from a disciplined society. They were godless men. Does it make sense to blame contemporary atheists for the sins of past atheists? More than a few of the traders and agents who exploited the Indians were Masons. This gives us no moral right to condemn current Masons for anything other than their own sins.

When men are found guilty and convicted, they may or may not face a physical prison, but they most certainly face an inner prison. Their conscience convicts them first of all, and their conscience imprisons them in the barless but far stronger prison of guilt.

Those who work to lay a "guilt trip" on us are simply trying to imprison us and to take away our freedom in order to have the freedom to work their own evil will.

At the least, they seek to put godly men on the defensive, trying to vindicate their innocence rather than to do their work. The answer thus to the question about the mistreatment of the Indians is a counter-charge: If you believe this country was stolen from the Indians, as a few million of you do, sell all you have, give your money and land to the Indians, and migrate back to Europe. Until you do that, believing what you do, are you not a hypocrite?

Guilt is the enemy of freedom. It disturbs rest and sleep, and it hinders our work and functioning. Most important, it is a precondition for the enslavement of a people. As I pointed out in *The Politics of Guilt and Pity* (1970), enslavement by guilt is an essential aspect of modern politics. If we are rich, we should feel guilty; if we are middle class, again, we are guilty; if we are lower class, we are somehow sub-human and responsible for it. If we are Christians, we should feel guilty. If we have had

a good education, shame on us. If we enjoy our work, or our play, our family, or our friends, we are somehow guilty of neglecting "the big picture," and are vile creatures. Politics has become the art of creating and manipulating guilt in order to increase the powers of the state.

The Bible too tells us that we are guilty men, that "there is none righteous, no, not one" (*Rom. 3:10*), "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (*Rom. 3:23*). For Scripture, however, the recognition and confession of sin and guilt is the first step towards absolution. We are told emphatically that sin and death are causally related: death is the consequence of sin and guilt. The whole point of Scripture is that redemption and freedom from sin, guilt, and death are to be had through Christ's atonement. Not only does Christ become our sin-bearer and vicarious atonement, but he remakes us so that we are a new creation. To be free from sin, guilt, and death is to be a new man with a renewed nature. The purpose of salvation is to make us a free people: "Ye shall know the truth [Jesus Christ], and the truth shall make you free" (*Jn. 8:32*). Only a free people can create a free world.

Thus, the release from sin and guilt before God is the necessary prelude to human freedom.

This is why atonement is so essential to political freedom. In the ancient world, men were aware of the dangers of guilt. Hence, they sought to be free by requiring atonement for all citizens. In Rome, all citizens (except soldiers on duty) had to be present for the annual lustrations, to be washed of their sins. Freedom from guilt was essential to the status of a freeman. All such efforts were futile of course, because the Roman lustrations provided no atonement. It should be noted, however, that Rome did see in its early years the relationship between a clear conscience before the gods and freedom.

Now the recognition is of the power of a bad conscience and guilt in enslaving people. A few years ago, one man told me that he no longer subscribed to a daily paper, because the input from the "news" was, "If I don't save the world before lunch, I'm a dirty, rotten bastard." More than a few businessmen have withdrawn from social responsibility in a sick disgust: both politicians and their modernist pastors do little more than to "lay a guilt trip" on all businessmen, and they are weary of it. But they are impotent in the face of it without faith. No man escapes from slavery merely by resenting it.

We have spoken of the role of politicians in fostering guilt. It is very necessary to speak also of the role of the clergy. I can never forget the friend who told me of her father, a life-long member of a fundamentalist church. Every pastor he had ever had was an expert at congregational control through guilt. Every Sunday that poor man went home feeling wretched because he had "failed" God; he was a miserable sinner, and so on. Instead of empowering the congregation to go forth in the power of the Lord to serve Christ's kingdom in every area of life and thought, the pastor made one and all feel

how sinful they were, and how they had to do more for and give more to their church to be "right" with the Lord.

This is preaching for enslavement, and it is very popular with both fundamentalist and modernist churches. It goes hand in hand with over-government. The guilt-laying church no less than the guilt-laying state wants to control people. A church that is very "strict" in church government is not necessarily any more godly than one which is very lax. Many a "strict" church prides itself on its godly severity when what it is really saying is that it does not believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Not without reason, Milton wrote, "New presbyter is but old priest writ large.")

Over-government allows no room for freedom nor for growth. It allows for one voice in the church, and none other. It furthers centralization of power in both church and state. In brief, over-government distrusts the power of God in the life of man. Some of the religious over-governors seem to believe that, while they were created in the image of God, the residue of men were only created in a partial image and, hence, need the dictatorship of the elite element. These non-elite ones are to be kept in line with a bad conscience.

Revelation 6:16 tells us of the guilty, as they face God's judgment, that they cry out to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

Earlier, we cited the use by Stalin of guilt as a means of enslaving and governing his subject peoples. It must be added that Stalin himself was governed by guilt. He demanded the most fulsome adulation and praise to conceal the truth of his nature; he wanted pictures of himself to mirror his ideal image and had several portrait painters shot for falling short of his demands. "The desire to humiliate and terrify extended even to his own family" (N. Tolstoy, 23), and, with it, an intense fear of all men, including his own carefully selected guards. He had an obsessive belief in the omnipresence of his enemies and went to extreme lengths to protect himself. The one constant factor in Stalin's policy, according to Tolstoy (50), was fear, a total fear that warped all his being. He had made slaves of all the people, but he himself was the continually haunted slave of his bad conscience and his fear of the people.

Since Stalin's day, there has been no essential change in the rulers of the Soviet system. Slave labor is still the lifeblood of the economy, and total surveillance, and total fear, prevail. The same extreme precautions are taken to protect the present leaders from the people. There is no real or substantial difference between Stalin and Andropov: both represent the enthronement of evil and of evil power. The cowardice of Stalin stemmed from a bad conscience; the same bad conscience governs in the Kremlin today.

Although not to the same degree, the same bad conscience governs most Western heads of states. They wage war, usually covertly, against God and man in terms

of a humanistic ideal. They see other men as no more than manure to fertilize the ground of a planned future. They sacrifice men in wars they do not plan to win, and they treat people as instruments to be manipulated.

Like a volcanic ash which covers the entire earth, colors the sun, and becomes a part of the air men breathe, so too a bad conscience is a part of the spiritual air of the twentieth century. It colors the life and thought of most men: it makes cowards and slaves of them.

The world's great and overwhelming need is for freedom, but men reject freedom when they reject Christ. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (*Jn. 8:32*). That truth is Jesus Christ, who declares "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (*Jn. 8:36*). This is a political and psychological fact and premise, and even more, it is the religious premise for all things.

A Review of Patrick J. Buchanan's *The Great Betrayal, How American Sovereignty and Social Justice Are Being Sacrificed to the Gods of the Global Economy*

By R. J. Rushdoony

The Great Betrayal (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998) is a work of major importance by one of the finest minds on the current scene. What it has to say is of very great importance, both economically and politically. My purpose in this review is not to describe Buchanan's superb analysis but to point to its theological importance, one of major importance in our time.

It has become commonplace in this century to see free trade as basic to American and world economic advancement. Nothing could be further from the truth. *Free trade* is an economic concept with theological roots. Because God is the Creator of heaven and earth and all things therein, it follows therefore that basic to all meaning is the theological interpretation. Now the essential meaning of free trade is the essential goodness of men and nations, so that all things work *naturally* together for good, not by God's ordination, but by man's. Now it is true that economic protectionism is plainly affected by original sin, but it can have other objectives

as well. Buchanan rightly points out that "global free trade" is at odds with early American thinking and is rooted in a secularism which is "a first cousin to Marxism" (174 f.). It is associated with a deep animosity towards our historic American views of church and state. Free trade represents a shift in man's worldviews "from a God-centered universe to a man-centered one" (201). Free trade also shifts the burden of taxes from trade to the citizen.

Clearly, ideas do have consequences, and free trade represents a world view alien to a Biblical one.

For men of the last century, like Richard Cobben, "free trade was the way, the truth, and the life" (189). Buchanan represents a Biblical perspective.

It is understandable why Buchanan's study is so important. It represents a return to Christian premises in the economic and political spheres, and to neglect Buchanan is to neglect our future. This is a book to read and circulate.

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Urban Nations Update: Doorkeeper Blues (Part 3)

By Steve M. Schlissel

We've been speaking about the challenges facing those responsible for admitting people into the church. We noted that some sort of standard and procedure for church membership are necessary: without a standard you could find everyone claiming membership; without a procedure no one could claim membership. We know that membership is a Biblical concept because the Bible provides for being put out of the church: you can't put out what was never in.

As believers in the covenant we hold that our children are members of Christ and his church. Heidelberg Catechism, Q74, asks: *Are infants also to be baptized?* The answer: *Yes, for since they, as well as their parents, belong to the covenant and people of God, and through the blood of Christ both redemption from sin and the Holy Ghost, who works faith, are promised to them no less than to their parents, they are also by Baptism, as a sign of the covenant, to be ingrafted into the Christian Church, and distinguished from the children of unbelievers, as was done in the Old Testament by circumcision, in place of which in the New Testament Baptism is appointed.*

My concern, therefore, is not with children of church members in good standing, but rather with how those who were never members of a true church might become such.

"That's easy," you say. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Well," I respond, "that's certainly a good starting place, but it doesn't quite cover all the bases." Especially on the mission field and in evangelistically active churches, the matter is keenly felt. Do you admit into membership everyone and anyone who says "I believe"? But beyond that lies a second question: is it fitting to admit anyone as a full member into a *Reformed* church solely on the basis of a credible Christian profession?

To the first question I trust most would answer, "No!" We should not reckon as church members drunks who were led to a profession in a stupor, or heretics whose profession is less than Trinitarian, or emotionalists who were merely manipulated at a "tent meeting."

In this column I once mentioned a "missionary" in Brooklyn who claimed over 300 converts among the Russians in Southern Brooklyn. I've yet to see these converts and I suspect I will not. Mark Twain could have extended his famous list: lies, damned lies, statistics, and evangelistic numbers. Missionaries who take seriously their task as servants of the reigning Messiah should not employ Arminian methodologies nor tabulate conversions

by counting hands. To believe, to profess faith, involves more than the lip.

Thus, it is appropriate for the doorkeepers of Reformed churches to examine candidates for admission as to the soundness of their faith and life. This may sound like a simple thing to do, but on the field it is rarely a black-and-white matter. Missionaries, being human, are anxious to see fruit from their endeavors and so are inclined to be generous in evaluating professions. Those whom missionaries work with are often eager to please the Lord's servant and so might be willing to "tell him what he wants to hear." Certainly, any church can accommodate a few of these superficial professors without much damage being done to anyone, certainly not the kingdom. But when this sort of professor makes up the majority, that's another story. And the pressure on modern missionaries for "results," for numbers, has, in too many cases, resulted in just such situations: churches made up of superficial professors who desire superficial worship and "covenant lite" living. It is important, therefore, for the doorkeepers to be mindful that it is not themselves they are serving in their position, and not fat-cat bureaucrats, but the Lord Christ and his church.

But let's move on to the second question. Let us suppose that we have before us a sincere convert seeking membership in a Reformed church, but this convert is *not* Reformed. Should he be admitted to membership in that church? To this question there have been two more or less distinct traditions among the sons of Calvin: that of the Presbyterian churches, who require only that their elders be Reformed, and that of the Continental Reformed, who expect both officers and members to be Reformed.

Clearly, the Presbyterian practice is easier. Full membership upon profession makes things simple. But I wonder if we might be missing something valuable from the Reformed tradition if we rush too quickly without considering its reasoning.

The Reformed tradition, it could be said, is more honest with the facts of history. While upholding the Reformed faith as "Christianity come into its own," it sincerely recognizes that there are *many* churches and communions which embrace faiths which, while certainly Christian, are less mature, even less faithful, than that system of doctrine expressed in our Creeds and Confessions. Recognizing them does not mean that Reformed churches must take steps to become like them.

Further, the Reformed tradition recognizes that the church's officers are both representatives and servants of

Christ *and* his church. They do not constitute the church in its entirety, as some Presbyterians tend to think, but they are officers of local churches. Reformed ministers are members of the churches they serve, but Presbyterian ministers have their church membership in a presbytery.

In the best Reformed tradition, the entire church is a covenanted community, and the terms of that covenant are not least-common-denominator, whatever-might-barely-pass-as-Christian terms, but explicitly *Reformed* terms. Thus, in the form for profession of faith in Reformed churches, candidates for full membership profess that they “heartily believe the doctrine . . . taught in *this* Christian church. . . .”

This is the key: *Presbyterians are structured around a concern to have Presbyterian presbyteries while Reformed churches are structured around a concern to have Reformed churches.*

Every professing member of a faithful Reformed church has agreed in principle that the children of that church belong to Jehovah in virtue of the covenant. Church order requires that the “covenant of God . . . be sealed to children of believers by holy baptism,” and that the elders “see to it that baptism is requested and administered as soon as feasible.” In a Reformed church, members may be lawfully put out for willfully failing to baptize their offspring, whereas Presbyterian churches could, theoretically, be made up of Baptist members.

Further, when a person joins a Reformed church he is entering a realm where the members have all vowed “to do all in [their] power to instruct [their children] in the Christian faith” they profess. This has ordinarily meant that Reformed churches *reject* civil government’s or secular education for their covenant children. The elders are *required* to “diligently promote the cause of Christian education”; they are bound to “diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools, and [to] urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools according to the demands of the covenant.”

Moreover, members of Reformed churches, officers included, covenant together that the youth will be instructed “in the teaching of the Scriptures as formulated in the creeds of the church” to prepare them “to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world.”

Of course, many faithful Presbyterian (and other!) churches do these very things, and some Reformed churches fail to do them at all. The point is that some do so as a chosen option, whereas Reformed churches have a self-identification which makes these things (in principle) no option at all. Reformed churches seek Reformed members who make a Reformed profession and follow through in raising Reformed children.

Which leads us back to the Doorkeeper Blues. We asked: Is it fitting to admit anyone as a full member into a *Reformed* church solely on the basis of a credible Christian profession? While it may at first have seemed

like a no-brainer to say “Yes,” I hope you can see now that it’s not that simple. Reformed churches, to be such, require *actual* Reformed members, including children.

Therefore, Reformed churches which seek to be faithful to Christ’s command to aggressively reach the lost with the gospel without compromising fidelity to their precious Reformed, covenantal legacy, face a unique challenge. It is a challenge which can, by grace, be met.

May I suggest that an effective cure for the Doorkeeper Blues might involve the following threefold “adjustment”?

ONE, that we have tiered memberships: Admission to the Lord’s Table would be granted to any lawfully baptized church member, whether of our communion or another orthodox body. There is far too much sacramental superstition, I fear, governing the practices of that terrified bunch who don’t merely fence the Table, but virtually circle the wagons and shoot at anyone who dares to approach it!

Beyond recognition of all who belong to Christ generally, a church could recognize those who belong to *it particularly* as occupying two membership levels. The first—call it associate membership or whatever you will—could be granted to any who make a credible evangelical profession but are clearly not Reformed, not covenantal. Perhaps “associates” would be distinguished in a Reformed church by not having a vote on certain matters in church administration, such as votes for officers. (The alternative—allowing non-Reformed members to vote for officers—could have results even more disastrous than those currently seen in Reformed churches today.) Full voting membership would be reserved for those professing the Reformed Faith and attempting to live out its covenantal implications.

TWO, practice pragmatic ecumenism. Freely refer inquirers and converts who do not wish to be Reformed to other believing churches. This is related to *One*, above. Reformed churches should always seek, above all things, to honor Christ. But to do that we must recognize that Reformed churches—for all their glorious distinctions—are most often *not* the only players in town. It is no crime to refer a committed Baptist to a good Baptist church! It is no crime to refer a “smells & bells” devotee to the most faithful of those churches in town which share that sensual bent.

THREE, discipleship into the Reformed Faith is more than just desirable. Each convert, each person transferring from a non-Reformed (or non-Presbyterian) church *ought to be* instructed in the mature expression of the Faith once for all received. A great tool for this, on the introductory level, is a little gem by Hylkema and Tuuk, *A First Book of Christian Doctrine* (we have copies available: request one when sending your donation). There are many other outstanding resources, for example, Calvin’s *The Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*.

Enough for now. This series was intended to provoke consideration and discussion of a serious problem faced daily by missionaries seeking to be faithful to their

Reformed calling, and by elders seeking to be faithful to theirs: by what standard are people to be admitted into church membership? Knowing what we know of the Bible *and* of history, how can we best serve Christ *and* those whom he is calling *and* the cause of Reformed truth?

By thinking covenantally we can *step back* and recognize the covenant of Christ in its broader sphere of operation (“the church universal and orthodox”). Then we can *step forward* to honor the distinctives we’ve inherited as Reformed believers: First, keeping covenant with God in all areas of life. Second, keeping covenant with our Fathers by learning and teaching the doctrines of the Reformed Faith both at home and within our churches.

Third, keeping covenant with the children of our churches, baptizing them *and* educating them in a covenantally faithful manner.

It makes missions a little tougher, to be sure, but hey! —who ever said curing the Doorkeeper Blues would be easy?

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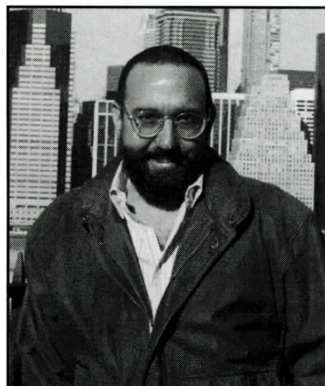


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All I Really Need to Know About Worship (I Don't Learn from the Regulative Principle)

By Steve M. Schlissel

Radical Solutions



We humans are easily inclined toward extremes. Think of the pendulum phenomenon: we see it stuck on one side. Then, using great force to dislodge it, we pass the *via media* and find ourselves stuck in the other corner.

Consider how some Christian groups deal with 1 Timothy 2:9: “. . . *in like manner also, that the women [must] adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing. . . .*”

There you have it. No braided hair, no gold jewelry, no pearls. And if that wasn't clear enough, 1 Peter 3:3 says it again: “*Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes.*” Well, isn't it plain that women must be plain? They should wear no makeup whatsoever, should not *coiffure* their hair and certainly should not wear gold jewelry, pearls, or beautiful clothing.

Similarly, there are Christian groups which, recognizing the dangers of alcohol and knowing that “drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom,” put forth what to them is the simplest possible solution: Christians may not drink alcoholic beverages. Period.

Again—though appearing less often in history—there have been groups which, seeing the frequent Scriptural warnings against sexual immorality, insist that celibacy is requisite, and that not merely for clergy but for all members. (Funny that one such group was named the Shakers when they weren't even allowed to shake it, baby, shake it. I think there might be one Shaker left. All that sublimating, though, got routed into great furniture!)

Now, I would say that in these cases, the radical “solution” is definitely to be preferred to the radical problem: better to have plain Christian women than hussies; better to drink a pack of nothing than to be a pack of drunks; better to be celibate than sexually profligate. But no careful student of Scripture would be satisfied to let things lie at either of these two extremes.

Why then do we accept the same sort of ultimatum from advocates of the Regulative Principle of Worship? “It is either/or,” they say. Either Rome's rule of worship or their rule of worship? “The contrast is plain,” says one of the RPW's leading modern defenders (a personal and beloved friend, by the way). “The one says—*What is not forbidden is permitted*; the other says—*What is not commanded is forbidden.*”

Consider: In the above cases we all can see a third way. In the first case: We know that God created woman an “adorner” by nature. He bids her in the above passages to keep that instinct under control. Moreover, she can beautify herself better through moderation while focusing on the development of a “gorgeous” character. God is not against female adornment! When Abraham's servant gave Rebecca gold and silver jewelry (*Gen. 24:53*), they weren't given her to put in a display case. And everywhere in Scripture we read of the normativity of a bride's adorning herself for her husband.

In the second case, when we read God's instructions to the Israelites to spend a portion of a certain tithing on any kind of *liquor* they wanted (*Dt. 14:26*), when we read of God's being praised for wine that makes men merry, when we read of Jesus' providing huge vats of vintage Merlot for the celebrants at a feast, then we know that the radical solution has missed something.

In the third case, well, it's pretty clear that sex within marriage is not only okay, it's right on—a very wonderful “norm” from our great and bounteous God!

In all cases we *know* that both positions—the stated problem (hussies/winos/Don Juans) and the offered solution (ugly women/abstinence/abstinence)—are radical impositions upon the people of God. Yet many seem to miss this dynamic (radical, unbiblical “solution” to a radical problem) when it comes to the Regulative Principle of Worship. Are the radical problem and the radical solution *really* our only choices, or is this just another instance of the pendulum phenomenon?

Now remember: We have asserted that in all cases the radical “solution” *is* to be preferred to the original “problem.” But why not admit that each of the proposed solutions pulls up short of commending to us a sound distillation of the Scripture's entire teaching on any of the subjects. The answer to the anti-music of Rap is not silence, however much silence is to be preferred to the problem! There *are* other solutions!

The Radical Solution at the Reformation

At the time of the Reformation, the nausea induced in the godly upon their awakening to the sinful Romish excesses and superstitions in worship gave rise to a radical, but not fully thought-out, solution, the Regulative Principle of Worship: *If it is not commanded in Scripture to be performed in worship, it is forbidden in worship.* It is sometimes said in other words: Only that which God has commanded is permitted.

This pendulum swing by the Reformers was certainly a breath of fresh air! Virtually overnight it cleansed the toxins out of Reformed worship like two months of cold turkey cleanses the horse out of a junkie's veins. Way to go! Out went the relics, the Mariolatry, the adoration of saints, the indulgences, the novenas and the like; in came clear, accessible, soul-saving, edifying Word-centered worship.

Though most excellent and welcome in its historic situation, the Regulative Principle somehow loosed itself from its moorings and took on a life of its own in certain Reformed and Presbyterian circles. Many took it to be not merely a *good* word on worship but the last word, in fact, *God's* last word on the subject. And as men are wont to do, zealots—who saw in this principle the *only* way to acceptably approach God—began to extend and apply it more and more rigorously. Like the AA-inspired teetotaler who swears off not only liquor, wine and beer, but rum candy too, the strict regulativist searched for gnats and, not surprisingly, found them abounding. Camels, however, were often overlooked.

Anything which could not pass the somewhat arbitrary test for “commanded” was viewed with grave suspicion as the very thing which would cause—or begin to cause—the Reformed churches to return to Babylon. And so, among some, the RPW means not only no Christmas and no Easter, but no musical instruments, no singing except Scripture texts—oops! Scratch that! Only *certain* Scripture texts, namely, the Psalms, may be sung in worship (some said in *or out* of worship). Not a few reject the use of creeds in worship, and some even frown upon the corporate praying of the Lord's Prayer in worship.

I might have inserted here further rationales used by its advocates to defend the Regulative Principle of Worship, but I want to get right to the point: while infinitely to be preferred to the problem it was designed to combat, the Regulative Principle of Worship falls short of conveying all that God in Scripture would have us know about regulating worship. It posits a false dilemma which, astonishingly, has bamboozled battalions of my fellow soldiers.

Other Choices

The regulativist tells us: It is *either* “What is not forbidden is permitted,” *or* “What is not commanded is forbidden.” This simply is not true. It is not “Either hussies in church or ugly women.” It is not “Either slosh-heads or dry prudes.” It is not “Either STD's abounding or no sex whatsoever.” There *are* other choices!

In the matter of a principle for acceptable worship, at least one other possibility presents itself immediately upon the most casual reflection, a possibility which, hopefully, will be shown to be the correct alternative to the Romish principle: “What is not commanded *might* be permitted. It depends upon other considerations.” Just what those “other considerations” are we hope eventually to cover. But for now let us consider just how short the RPW itself falls when examined in the light of Scripture.

I will offer seven broad reasons for Reformed people to reject the proposition that the Scripture teaches the Regulative Principle of Worship. But please carefully note these qualifications: 1) I am *not* arguing against the sort of worship found in RPW churches. For my money, it is vastly superior to most other extant worship forms (of which I am aware). The RPW is a mistake, but if you have to make a mistake, this is a very fine one. 2) By arguing against the regulative principle of worship *per se*, I'm sorry to say that I part company from many of my colleagues. Most of my compatriots tend to embrace *the principle*, choosing only to argue whether it is too rigorously or loosely applied in this or that circumstance. No, my argument is not with the application of the principle: it is that the RPW itself is *not* Biblical.

We can begin to see that this is so when we examine the typical arguments used by regulativists in attempting to establish their case. Examination will show that their case is weak indeed.

The (Weak) Case for RPW

The regulativists typically isolate the alleged “proof” texts from their larger contexts. This use of Scripture is questionable at best, deceitful at worst. Rather than providing a firm foundation for their principle, this very selective method suggests that it is built on sand.

In virtually all regulativist literature the same texts are appealed to over and again, nearly always, it seems, without an honest consideration of their contexts. Such consideration would so qualify the meaning of the chosen verses as to reveal that they lend no support whatsoever to the principle they supposedly prove. In short, the regulativist doesn't employ texts: he conscripts them into thrall. Let's consider a few of their favorites to see if this isn't so.

Leviticus 10:1-11, especially verses 1 and 2. Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them, added incense, and offered unauthorized, strange, “outside” or foreign fire before Jehovah, who then turned them into strange fire. This verse is beat to death by regulativists as somehow proving “if it's not commanded, it's forbidden.”

But a simple consultation with Exodus 30:9 shows the true character of their sin:

Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.

Well now, doesn't *that* affect our interpretation! Nadab and Abihu did not *simply* do something not commanded, *they did something expressly forbidden*. You see that even the principle which the regulativists *reject* takes care of Nadab and Abihu. "If it's not forbidden, it's permitted," say those at the other extreme. Well, in this case their principle has the base covered: It was forbidden, therefore it was not permitted. Simple, eh? No need for the RPW here.

Furthermore, there is a strong suggestion in the account (*v. 8*) that the boys were drunk when they performed their folly. It is plausible that in an inebriated condition they failed to distinguish between the holy and the common (*v. 9*). God provided an object lesson. But whether or not that is so, their sin clearly consisted in doing what God had expressly forbidden. No RPW here.

Likewise with the texts regulativists cull from the Prophets. Their employment of Isaiah's indictment of hypocritical Israel, for example, is representative of the sort of "proof" they offer. The long list of charges against Israel in chapter 1 is (amazingly) pared down to a mere particle that (happy coincidence!) seems to support their view. "When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand?" (*v. 12*)

Well, let's try to answer that question: Who *did* require what Israel is said to have been doing? If we are going to find the regulativist's principle here, we ought to expect the prophet to read a bill of particulars brimming with condemnations of man-made innovations. So just what *does* the passage say Israel was doing?

- 1) They were bringing offerings (*as God commanded*)
- 2) Burning incense (*as God commanded*)
- 3) Observing New Moon festivals (*as God commanded*)
- 4) Observing Sabbaths (*as God commanded*)
- 5) Observing appointed feasts (*as God commanded*)
- 6) Offering prayers (*again, as God commanded*)

When God asks, "Who hath required this at your hand?", if the emphasis is on "Who required," the answer is, "God!" But if the emphasis is on "*your* hand," ah!, we now find the meaning of the indictment. The sin of Israel in Isaiah 1 did *not* consist in an error in religious form, *i.e.*, in their bringing into worship something he did not command. He commanded everything Isaiah lists!

On the contrary, their sin was that they brought it with wrong hands. Their hands, God says, were bloody (*v. 15*), yet they thought that mere religious ceremony would cleanse them! This is Isaiah's version of Psalm 50, especially *v. 16*: "To the wicked, God says: 'What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips? You hate My instruction.'" "I don't need your offerings," says the Lord. "If I were hungry, I wouldn't ask you for something to eat."

Isaiah does not fault Israel for violating the RPW, but for their stinking, *hypocritical* formalism. They did all the things God asked for *except* be converted! Isaiah 1 is a

wake-up call to religious formalists, all right, but it has nothing whatsoever to say in support of the RPW.

Likewise Jeremiah 7. Regulativists like to cite verse 24:

But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

Again, the context is simply ignored! What a different impression is left when the context is supplied:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat meat. For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, "Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you." Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward.

Yes, that's right. The broader passage, if it says anything to a worship principle at all, doesn't say it in support of the RPW! God is saying just the opposite: "To appear before me with just the right form and just the right regulations, but to leave your heart at home, is not to appear before me at all." Punctilious form without a heart made new is worthless. God *denigrates* his own appointed forms to drive home his concern. This is a Jewish manner of speaking, employed by Jesus and Paul in the New Testament Scriptures, employed by the LORD here: It not to be taken as an absolute denigration, but a relative one in order to make a point. It is as if he is saying, "Who asked for your sacrifices? Me? No. I asked for your hearts!"

A couple more citations from "the regulativist files" will demonstrate, I pray, that their typical use of Bible texts is arbitrary and therefore, *prima facie*, ought to be discounted.

Another portion of the Prophets drafted into the RPW's army of Bible snippets is from Jeremiah. I quote a leading regulativist: "Thus the Lord declared (by Jeremiah) 'This evil people, who refuse to hear my words, who walk in the imagination of their heart ... shall even be like this girdle which is good for nothing.'"

Ooh, sure sounds like proof of the RPW, doesn't it? "Whatever is not commanded is forbidden," and men's imaginations are ... Hmm. Wait a minute ... I wonder what was in that ellipsis ("...")?

Take a look. In fact, let's look at the original verse in its entirety:

This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing. (*Jer. 13:10*)

Well, isn't *that* a different kettle of fish! They were walking after their own hearts *into idolatry*, they were explicitly worshipping *other gods*, they were doing something expressly forbidden. Thus, here again is a sin adequately covered by that "other," dreaded principle: You may not do what God forbids.¹

The RPW author who conscripted Jeremiah, however, says, "[T]he reason given for this strong condemnation [that they'd become good-for-nothing—sms] is that they offered worship 'which I never commanded nor spoke, no, neither did it come into my mind'" (He here references *Jer. 19:5*). "Israel's apostasy from true worship," says our friend, "can be summed up in these words: 'which I did not command them.' Because they were not satisfied to do what God commanded, and only what God commanded, they were condemned."

This is patently false to the text. Israel was there condemned—and that explicitly—not for failing to follow the RPW but for doing what God had forbidden. They worshipped *idols*. That's what *God* says they did. But what God says is edited out by RPW advocates to conform to a conclusion they have determined in advance must be reached.

Finding little support in Scripture for a principle that all (should) agree brought so much blessing to Christendom was apparently intolerable to its proponents. Their escape? Do violence to the Scripture to *make* it speak their language.

Perhaps their most offensive redaction occurs with Jeremiah 19:5, alluded to above. The edited verse ("They offered worship '*which I never commanded nor spoke, no, neither did it come into my mind*'") leads readers to believe that God's disapproval of what Israel did is rooted in this: they did something, however innocuous, which he had not commanded, thus violating the RPW.

In fact, what is there condemned is . . . well, read it for yourself:

They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind.

I told you before that at some point the RPW took on a life of its own. This is evidenced in the controlling influence it has exerted over the exegetical methodology of many of its champions. The same texts are carted out and mishandled in similar ways in virtually all their works (better get used to it!).

So firmly in the grip of this principle is one minister presently in their ranks that he actually—in all seriousness—asserted that *singing Scripture choruses in worship*² is the moral equivalent of *child sacrifice in the sight of God*. He used Jeremiah 19:5 as *proof*. I cannot but wonder if his is the same religion as mine, so different are our approaches to Scripture!

Anyway, that's number one: Regulatavists consistently ignore the Biblical contexts of their cited passages. One might say that they have, by sheer force of will, domesticated their pet verses.

Number two, next month. (*Isaiah 8:20*)

¹ I should mention that I do agree with regulatavists that this "high church" principle is not completely adequate for all cases; however, it happens to be *more than adequate* to cover most of the problems they cite!

² No other portion of the Bible may be sung, you see. Psalms, *in his view*, have exclusive right to be found on the lips of God's gathered people.

Steve Schlissel has been pastor of Messiah's Congregation in Brooklyn, NY since 1979. He serves as the Overseer of Urban Nations (a mission to the world in a single city), and is the Director of Meantime Ministries (an outreach to women who were sexually abused as children). Steve lives with his wife of 24 years, Jeanne, and their five children.

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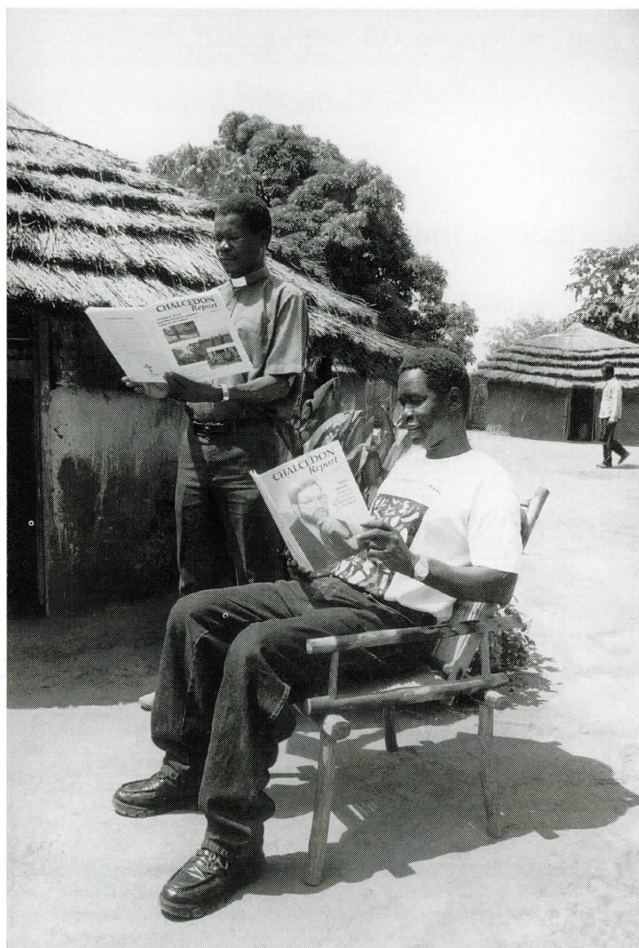
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- March 14 Brian Abshire and Andrew Sandlin lecture. 10:00 a.m. Reformed Heritage Mini-Conference, **Salida, CA**. For more information, contact Brian Abshire (209) 544-1572.
- March 19 Andrew Sandlin lectures. 7:00 p.m. Dallas/Fort Worth Airport Marriott, 9440 Freeport Parkway, **Irving, TX** (972) 929-8800.
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- May Peter Hammond travels to the U. S. for speaking engagements, details to be announced later.
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- May 13-15 Steve Schlissel, **Chicago, IL**. Illinois Homeschooling Conference. For more information, contact Ken Sisson (847) 872-6279, ext. 309.
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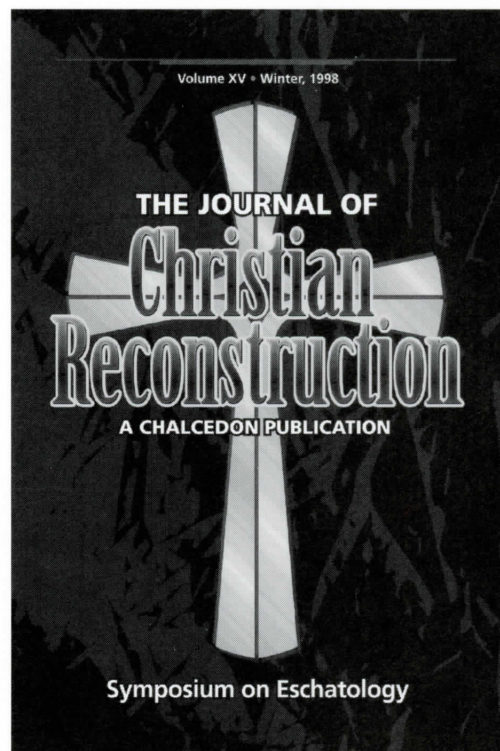
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